



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Executive Department

TO ALL WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME – GREETINGS:

WHEREAS, Emerson Eugene Stevens was convicted in the Circuit Court of the County of Lancaster on July 12, 1986, of two felonies: Abduction with Intent to Defile and First-Degree Murder; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stevens was sentenced by a jury to 65 years in prison for the Abduction with Intent to Defile conviction; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stevens was sentenced by a jury to 99 years and one day in prison for the First-Degree murder conviction; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stevens served 32 years in the Virginia Department of Corrections before being paroled in 2017; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Stevens, through the University of Virginia Innocence Project, submitted a petition for clemency seeking an absolute pardon based on the circumstances surrounding his innocence, including the decision of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit finding that Mr. Stevens had presented sufficient evidence of his innocence; and

WHEREAS, the Fourth Circuit went on to encourage the Governor to exercise his pardon power in Mr. Stevens' case, noting that the executive's power and responsibility both before and after conviction remain fundamental in our system of divided powers; and

WHEREAS, in Judge Stephanie Thacker's concurring opinion, she stated that the evidence as a whole overwhelmingly supports a conclusion that no reasonable jury would have convicted [Mr.] Stevens; and

WHEREAS, since earning parole four years ago, Mr. Stevens has had no new arrests and has maintained steady employment; and


WHEREAS, upon careful deliberation and review of all the information and circumstances of the matter, I have decided it is just and appropriate to grant this **ABSOLUTE PARDON** that

reflects Mr. Stevens' innocence of Abduction with Intent to Defile and First-Degree Murder, for which he was convicted on July 12, 1986;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Ralph S. Northam, Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia, in accordance with the authority granted to me under Article V, Section 12 of the Constitution of Virginia, do hereby grant unto Emerson Eugene Stevens this Absolute Pardon from the convictions handed down by the Circuit Court of the County of Lancaster on July 12, 1986.

Given under my hand and the Lesser Seal of the Commonwealth at Richmond, this 13th day of August in the year of two thousand and twenty-one and this 246th year of the Commonwealth of Virginia.





Governor of Virginia



Secretary of the Commonwealth